

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

5.1 Present Environmental Setting

The Mahoning River passes through residential, urban, industrial, brownfield, and undeveloped areas. Many of the riverfront properties around Warren and Leavittsburg are well-kept residential properties, suggesting some degree of prosperity in those areas. The properties around Perkins Park and Packard Park in Warren are particularly large and well-kept, and suggest affluence. As the river passes from Warren it enters an industrialized stretch of river dominated by active steel and coke plants.

Niles and Girard are well-kept, older, middle-class towns. As the river approaches Youngstown, railroad yards and industrial properties begin to encroach on the river. In Youngstown, the river is paralleled on one side by railroads and on the other by commercial and industrial properties. Some of the industrial property appears to be abandoned, or is empty where old mills have been razed. The bridges in Youngstown are sometimes used by the homeless for shelter.

Large sections of abandoned industrial property dominate the river banks from Youngstown through Campbell to Struthers. Current initiatives are in place to restore portions of this major brownfield site to economic health through refurbishing of existing and the construction of new industrial buildings. Between Campbell and Lowellville some light industry exists along the river, but much of the riverbank is used for railroads or is undeveloped. Lowellville is a small, pleasant community that benefits from the scenic nature of the Mahoning River. Lowellville has a small, working foundry, but many of its residents work in nearby commercially-oriented suburban communities.

5.2 Cultural Resources

In compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Ohio State Historic Preservation Office (OHSHP) was consulted with regard to potential impacts to cultural resources that may result from this proposed dredging project. The OHSHP responded by letter dated August 8, 1998 (Appendix N), and provided information on known resources within and immediately adjacent to the project area as well as suggestions for future research needs.

A systematic historical survey has not been completed to date, but according to OHSHP files, there are several archaeological sites, architectural properties, and National Register of Historic Places listed and eligible properties that will or may be affected by the proposed project. In addition, there is a high probability that several undiscovered historic properties exist within the project area.

A systematic Phase 1 cultural resources investigation will be required to assess the effects of this undertaking upon known and potential historic properties. This investigation will be accomplished during the Feasibility Phase Studies for this project. The USACE, Pittsburgh District, will work closely with the OHSHP to develop a comprehensive study that will identify, evaluate, and assess impacts of the undertaking upon all cultural resources within the project area. This study will incorporate multidisciplinary research objectives, including but not limited to literature searches, field survey, geomorphological, and historic architectural investigations. The projected cost of the Phase 1 cultural resources study is included in the line item "Environmental Compliance and Required Mitigation" found in costing tables referenced in Section 4.

5.3 Probable Impacts of Proposed Actions

Implementation of the preferred remedial alternative would have the following impacts:

- Removal of contaminated sediments would allow the river to become a warm water fishery and likely result in conditions allowing elimination of the HHA. Given the high population density in the Mahoning Valley, it is expected that numerous anglers and other recreationists would use the river and that businesses catering to fisherman and canoeists would develop.
- The improvement in river aesthetics would increase the value of property along the river.
- New commercial or even residential development would be likely to occur along the river.

Overall, the river restoration would provide a valuable new recreational amenity and would significantly enhance the quality of life throughout the project area.

5.4 Utilities

Utilities companies commonly place utility lines on flood plains in river valleys due to their relatively flat terrain, and the ease of digging in soil riverbanks. Railroads (often built to parallel to rivers) and bridges also tend to be convenient places to put utility lines because public access is restricted and right-of-way issues have already been resolved. If restoration activities are undertaken, it is likely that some utilities would need to be relocated.

There was no comprehensive study of utility interferences performed for this report. Table 13 is a listing of unverified utility crossings and interferences compiled from extant mapping and field reconnaissance notes. Further study of possible utility interferences will be needed when a Mahoning River restoration Feasibility Study is undertaken.

Appendix O lists all of the supporting data developed during reconnaissance studies, including photographs of the project area, and which are not referenced elsewhere in this report.